HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

VOL. VI No. 2 February 1985

AFRICAN HISTORY

The above is not a misprint. While it is certainly true that there are many among us who feel comfortable with the term, "Black American," the fact is that we so-called "Black Americans" are as African in ancestry as are so-called "White Americans" in their European ancestry. The month of February has been designated as that particular time for focus on the history of the achievements of so-called "Black people." There being no such continent as "Blackland," This February edition of the FLAME will focus on African History--the history of African people in Africa, in the U.S., etc.

More specifically, we will present a history of the struggle of African people, in the Americas and in Africa, against both the slavery of colonialism and chattel slavery. This shall be, by no means, a thorough presentation but, rather, fragments enabling us to see our current situation with some clarity of vision.

It is hoped that you will find this "African History" edition of the FLAME to be informative and thought-provoking.

Slavery

"In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries(in Europe) the recently established monarchies and national states, burgeoning commercial classes, trading companies, and adventurers were all drawn together. The common magnet was the search for gold and other precious goods, for the wealth and power these created, and the new trading routes to the Orient which led to them. At the same time, while their newly redefined religion and philosophy taught these men that human freedom had few limits for the strong, their advances in weaponry convinced them that there was no strength to match their own."

(from THERE IS A RIVER by Vincent Harding)

"Since 1510 the Portuguese had been supplying slaves to Spanish plantations in the New World(The Spaniards, curiously enough, were forbidden to engage in this trade themselves)...

"But Portugal was not strong enough to maintain its position of primacy in Africa. By 1642 the Dutch, who, like the English, did not even bother to send missionaries until centuries later, pushed the Portuguese off most of the important slave coasts of West Africa, though some individual Portuguese traders remained active in Nigeria...

"We have already referred to the most important result of slavery, the creation of a situation in which political domination of black by white became part of the proper order of things. This was significant not only in Africa but in the New World too. In Brazil and the Caribbean Negroes came as slaves; they remained to form population groups which are still striving to overcome the onus of their former status. So too in the United States. In both cases the slave status of blacks made it easier to justify white political domination in Africa and vice

versa..."

(from AFRICA's SEARCH FOR IDENTITY by Victor C. Ferkiss)

"Often the captives were forced to march many miles from the interior areas to the coast...

"Then the ships came, from Lisbon and Barcelona, from Bristol and Liverpool, from Nantes and Rotterdam, eventually from Newport and Boston...

"On such prison ships, in the face of such arsenals of guns and fear, the early struggles for black freedom were waged... As long as the slave trade lasted, so long did the Africans continue to do battle for their humanity. ...

"Most often unarmed, save for their chains and pieces of wood and steel they had secreted among them, the captives rose up repeatedly on these ships near the shores of the homeland. Women fought as well as men. Priests and other religious leaders were regularly at the forefront of the struggles. Together they battled to remain in Africa, to continue the history and traditions they had created, to resist the breaking up of their families and the chain of their existence. They fought desperately for release from the power of the European intruders."

(from THE OTHER AMERICAN REVOLUTION by Vincent Harding)

"...Throughout the Black diaspora, resistance took the form of runaway slave communities, called maroons(French and English), palenques(Spanish), quilombos (Portuguese) and/or mocambos(Ambundu for 'hideout'). In late-sixteenth-century Mexico, for example, African runaway slaves had become such a problem that the Spanish authorities ordered the castration of Black men absent for more than six months. Vigilante systems for patrolling the roads were established in rural areas. The crown granted rewards for the capture of palenque rebels and material incentives were offered to slaves and former fugitives who betrayed their brothers and sisters who were in hiding. In Veracruz, African guerillas regularly destroyed crops, attacked wagons and burned plantation houses to the ground. In the early seventeenth century, a militant palenque of Indians and Africans led by chief Yanga fought Spanish regulars to a stalemate. Local Spanish authorities were forced to sign a treaty with Yanga, which established the legal town of San Lorenzo de los Negros. Between 1731 and 1781, Cuban Blacks created a palenque, Poblado del Cobre, in Oreiente Province that comprised over one thousand persons. The greatest maroon of all was Palmares, a series of African quilombos founded in about 1600 and surviving armed assaults by the Dutch and Portuguese colonial troops until 1694. The Palmarista general Zambi successfully defended the territory until the combined weight of American Indian, Portuguese colonial and mestizo soldiers, skilled in guerilla tactics, were hurled against him. After a two-year siege of the major rebel city, 200 Palmarista soldiers committed suicide rather than suffer the humiliation of returning to slavery. Two hundred more Palmaristas were killed in hand-to-hand combat on the final day of fighting, with Zambi succumbing only after he was seriously wounded. On November 20, 1695, Zambi was decapitated in a public execution; his head was exhibited before Black slaves 'to kill the legend of his immortality.' In the United States, wherever the frontier geography permitted the possibility of maroons, Afro-American Zambis were found. At least fifty maroons existed in the U.S. between 1672 and 1864 in the swamps and Appalachian hill country of the Carolinas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Virginia and Louisiana..."

(from HOW CAPITALISM UNDERDEVELOPED BLACK AMERICA by Manning Marable)

Colonialism

"In 1652 Jan van Reebeck established the Cape Colony for the Dutch East India Company...it plied the trade with the Indian sub-continent and the East Indies. But more than that, it represented a paramilitary force which commandeered the wealth of its 'trading partners' at gunpoint...The Cape Colony was established as a provisioning station astride the route to the Indies. It was populated by trustworthy Europeans who would grow, store and provide ships 'provisions,' 'rest and recreation' where necessary.

"In addition, the same population was expected to defend the colony against the 'natives' and the company's rivals, of which there were many--most notably the English.

"...Driven by a misplaced notion of being the 'chosen people,' organized as commandos and hunting parties, they committed genocide against the original Hottentot and Bushmen inhabitants. The rural economies they established were based on slaves imported from other parts of Africa and Asia and the remnants of the original inhabitants now reduced to pass law slavery...The superstructure of values and ideas was dominated by a garrison mentality for this imperialist expansion was accompanied at every step by staunch, unflagging and heroic resistance by the indigenous peoples of South Africa..."

(from SOUTHERN AFRICA/BLACK AMERICA by Bill Sales)

"The European governments clashed with Mumbo(a religious cult in Southwestern Kenya), Nyabingi(a religious cult in Southwestern Uganda), and a number of similar revitalizing sects. They worried about and fought the Kimbangu movement of the lower Congo, the Watchtower, Mwana Lesa, and Lenshina disturbances of Northeastern Zambia, the Prophet Harris movement in the Gold and Ivory Coasts, sects in Southern Africa and Nigeria, and Islamic brotherhoods in West Africa. ..Their importance to Africans was largely due to the fact that they were black-controlled during an era when whites dominated most spheres of activity, even the non-Islamic institutions of newly introduced religions...But of all these African religious manifestations, the Nyabingi and the Mumbo were among the most indigenously authentic in their origin and organization, and the most militant in their manifestation of hostility to white rule...

"The Mahdiya, Nyabingism, Mumboism, and Chilembwe's rebellion(1915 in southeastern Africa) were organized by or around religious figures and were sustained, as were the simba(rebel movement in the Congo at about the turn of the century), by the mobilizing force of powerful supernatural observance. Even the Zulu uprising...was probably to a large extent assisted by traditional para-religious loyalties to Zulu ancestors and their contemporary representatives..."

(from REBELLION IN BLACK AFRICA by Robert I. Rotberg)

.....

So where are we now? The above excerpts appear for the purpose of reminding or informing us of some of the background against which colonialism and chattel slavery showed their faces. The excerpts also function to provide insight into the nature and means of African people's struggle against enslavement. Such information enables us to see our present predicament(in whatever parts of the world we happen to be) in historical context.

Where are we now? We are in trouble. Yet there are those of us who would prefer not to see trouble, who would prefer not to see the political and economic enslavement of African people in the U.S.; the famine in the Sahel region of Africa; the torture and murder of our Sisters and Brothers in the U.S. neo-colony, Haiti; apartheid in Azania(South Africa); etc. There are those of us who wish to look the other way, as if there were some

other place to look to.

Our time is far too precious to spend this month paying tribute to "black achievers" who deny their Africanness in word and oppose our interests in deed. Our time is far too precious to spend it, motivated by our first-negro fetish, reciting a litany of the names of a host of opportunists, puppets, etc.: Clarence Pendleton, Coretta Scott King, Andrew Young,....

This should be a time of honest and critical reflection, a time of sober questioning. Why is it, for example, that our young people know of Michael Jackson, Prince, and Rick James but know nothing of Gil Scott-Heron, Miles Davis, and Abby Lincoln? How was it that, after many years of disregard for our needs by the Democratic and Republican parties, we fell for the old trick again in 1984? Why is it that, as Malcolm said, "we(still) bleed for the slavemaster but will not bleed for ourselves"?

There are these and many other questions which we must ask of ourselves and each other. Hopefully, this edition of the FLAME serves to stimulate our asking important questions and arriving at some viable and sorely needed answers.

--Editor

H.A.C.O. Picks New Chairman

On Tuesday, January 15, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization membership voted in Ajabu(Alan Hardin) as Chairman. This was a special election held to fill the vacancy in the chairmanship position. Ajubu, previously the treasurer for the organization will hold office until regular elections are conducted this Spring. We wish Ajabu success in his job of heading H.A.C.O.

Manuscripts Wanted

THE BLACK SCHOLAR is soliciting manuscripts for its March 1985 issue. The theme will focus on American-born African women and perspectives on current issues in the women's movement: reproductive rights, women in politics, reproductive rights, feminization of poverty, cultural contributions of American-born African women, and theoretical treatments of women's oppression.

Deadline: Feb. 15. Send manuscript to or seek information from:

Editor/THE BLACK SCHOLAR
P.O. Box 7106
San Francisco, CA.
94120 (415) 541-0311 or 0312

Family-Feb.19

At 6:00 on the evening of February 19, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will present "The Family and Socialization" at the Nebraska State Prison in Lincoln. Speakers for this program will be Kayline Ekeh of the U.N.O. Black Studies Dept. and Matthew Stelly, Director of the Malone Community Center. Following their addresses, refreshments will be served--and probably consumed.

This program is being presented by the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization in an effort to rekindle, in whatever little way we can, the fire of family/community spirit which is too greatly lacking among our people at this time. If you are interested in attending, please write to: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68502-0500. Or call 471-3161(ext. 380) between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday-Friday. Ask for Bill Huelsdonk.

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Music from Africa

AFRICAN RECORD CENTER
1194 Nostrand Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11225 --records

GIRAFFE RECORDS
P.O. Box 775
College Station
N.Y., N.Y.
10030 --records

ART AFRICA
1263 Fulton St.
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11216 --records, etc.

WEST AFRICAN BUSINESS ENT., INC.
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Brooklyn, N.Y.
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838 Nostrand Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11216 --records, clothing, posters

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853 St. John's Place
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11216 --literature

ETHIOPIAN ARTS, INC.
780 Nostrand Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11216 --clothing, etc.

The above listing obtained from the new monthly publication,

AFRICAPOP
1194 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11225

An African proverb applied to the competition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. for influence in Africa: "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers."

Pseudo-Leadership

-A'Jamal Rashad Byndon

Recently, we have seen in the media an inordinate amount of news coverage for inactive Blacks in some leadership positions. This should not come as a surprise because, in the Black community, many things do not work. And the community tolerates this.

For example, we have social service agencies with gross mismanagement of public funds and personnel; elected officials in positions of leadership who refuse to speak for or on behalf of Black people; new media minorities avoiding contact in the communities to which they owe their existence; a black studies dept. at U.N.O. which is the dumping ground for incompetence; and countless other functionaries claiming to represent the Black community.

Some may think the community gets negative results because it does not demand better service. We see now that the meek are inheriting the dirt.

The Omaha World Herald printed an article on Ms. Brenda Warren becoming the first black vice-president of the Omaha School Board. She, by the 36th. ballot, was finally chosen to be the first Black president. One might say "SO WHAT?" During Ms. Warren's tenure as the first Black vice-president, not one significant change has occured to benefit the 25% of the students in the public schools who are Black! They are still being brainwashed about Black culture, have the highest push-out rate, and still get the lowest scores as a group on any and all achievement tests. Yet some white racists are calling this progress. And, worse, whenever these racists make their declarations, there always seems to be some group of Black cheerleaders rushing forth to say, "That's right, Boss."

Black people should realize that the fact that a Black person has arrived at a position of leadership is not the crucial point, but whether and how that

person exercises leadership. We should realize that those Black people whose mouths are glued to the breasts of racist corporations will not deliver us out of "Babylon's system." And the fact is that many of our "leaders" do work for these corporations and represent their interests more than ours.

I have noticed the lack of promotion of Blacks in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. What the "grapevine" keeps telling me is that some of these negroes have been caught chasing "snow." During these grave times, these negroes embrace death while claiming to represent our community. No way! The question I pose now is: can these chameleons personify the struggle and the lives many of our ancestors lost so we might enjoy the right to write letters or speak the truth. I, for one, will not abdicate my right to challenge anyone for his or her incompetence.

As the late Steve Biko, a proud South African, once said: "What we want is not black visibility but real black participation." If we continue to allow negro pseudo-leaders to "represent" us, we, as a people, will soon be in chains as our foreparents were in chains. I will keep my eyes and ears opened to see the approaching enemy, while negroes break-dance or tap-dance their lives away. I have whispered. May my action thunder.

The struggle continues.

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, an organization of African men at the Nebraska State Prison. We are dedicated to the idea that liberation can only be achieved by attainment of healthy consciousness. The FLAME is a Pan-Africanist publication, printing news and views of and about African people(wherever we may happen to be on the globe). Submit articles to HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68502-0500--Editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(David L. Rice)

Food Aid to Africa

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization has voted to contribute $100.00 for the purpose of feeding our starving Sisters and Brothers of the Sahel region of Africa. We are taking this action both because we care about our people and because we wish to set an example. We know that we have Sisters and Brothers and African-American organizations which have money and that, too often, this money is thrown away on trifles. By making this contribution, we are appealing to you Brothers and Sisters outside of the prison to buy a little less scotch, leave that mink coat in the store window, do whatever you have to do to help those who desperately need our help.

Below is a listing of agencies, functioning as conduits for aid to famine-striken areas in Africa. This list is taken from the January 21 edition of JET MAGAZINE.

*AFRICARE
1601 Connecticut Avenue
NW Washington, D.C.
20009

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMM.
1501 Cheery St.
Philadelphia, PA
19102

AMERICAN RED CROSS(Africa Relief)
43 East Ohio St.
Chicago, ILL
60611

*BARAC(Black American Response to African Crisis)
919 W. Huntington Dr.
Monrovia, CA
91016

CARE
660 First Avenue
N.Y., N.Y.
10016

DIRECT RELIEF INT'L.
P.O. Box 30820
Santa Barbara, CA
93130

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
P.O. Box 2045
Church St. Station
N.Y., N.Y.
10008

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
475 Riverside Dr.
N.Y., N.Y.
10115

GRASS ROOTS INT'L.
P.O. Box 312
Cambridge, MA
02139

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF
360 Park Avenue South
N.Y., N.Y.
10010

*PROJECT MERCY
70 W. Madison St.
Suite 1400
Chicago, ILL
60620

OXFAM
115 Broadway
Boston, MA
02116

SAVE THE CHILDREN
P.O. Box 925
Westport, CT
06881

WORLD VISION
919 West Huntington Dr.
Monrovia, CA
91016

*According to JET MAGAZINE, these efforts are headed by African-Americans.

poetry

You're Tilting at Windmills

it must be simplicity to change
your name your hair
to make your present/past disappear
to have your ancestry wonder
if you're one of them(or us)
when you become another name
you become another idea
another image
another proof you've failed
your self is diseased
your mind is moribund
you ripen like fruit too long on its tree
falling off over dead deadened
(you) go to screaming about
someone's momma(yours is one too)
mumbling about the bloods being
one of THOSE THINGS(i don't mean
negro either)
calling the round face
aquiline-nosed hebrew a hymie
and blaming goldstein 'cause he owned
the food market
the appliance center
the furniture store(hence, some of
your life)
because you brought (on credit)
that tainted meat or broken down seat
out of his window
(it looked so good there!)
you took it home proudly
told your neighbors how tight
you and goldy were (until) a truck
showed up reclaiming a bit of your life
you wouldn't pay for
why didn't you change your hair then
or your hair to goldblum iceberg or brick
and throw one through his window
'cause this is amerikkka and you can do
anything you want to but live in autonomy
or with laissez-faire
or just plain freedom
because you are...so you run about from
week to moment believing changing
your name your hair your past will
make you happening and in the make-
believe scripts of hollyweird or
pennsylvania avenue you may be right
but here and now shuffling
to a moonwalk
won't bring about equality.

-wili otey